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PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLN
RUEHLZ RUEHNEH RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHSK RUEHSL RUEHSR RUEHVK RUEHYG
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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3483
INFO RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5685
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3400
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3264
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3928
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1152
RHMCSSU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3911
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 001186

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB
ANKARA FOR AGRICULTURE COUNSELOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: EAGR ETRD SENV TX
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: CHEMICALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL
DAMAGE

¶1. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Not for Internet
Distribution.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: Although information about
environmental hazards is difficult to obtain in
Turkmenistan, occasional reports indicate the
existence, if not the scope, of such problems. In two
separate cases, the uncontrolled release of poisonous
chemicals into the environment caused the death of
livestock. While procedures exist to minimize the
risk of such damage, in practice a lack of expertise
and resources undermines effective implementation. In
order to avoid penalties, local officials did not
report the incidents and the owners of the livestock
were not compensated. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (U) On August 24, a resident of Serdar Etrap in
Balkan Province told a Pol/Econ local staff member
that forty sheep were poisoned and killed by a
chemical that was present in the water. Apparently, a
defoliant that was used by a state farm contaminated
the water in the irrigation canal, which the villagers
used as a watering place for their livestock. The
contact said the incident went unnoticed by local
officials and the owners of poisoned sheep were not
compensated.

¶4. (SBU) The head of the National Plant Research
Station told Pol/Econ local staff member that any
agricultural chemical, before it is passed to farmers,
undergoes an approval process. The station's
specialists develop recommendations on the method of
its application and dosage. It is the responsibility
of the State Concern on Fertilizers and Chemicals
"Turkmenokunhimiya" to apply pesticides, herbicides
and defoliants on wheat and cotton fields. However,
lack of skilled specialists in this area does not

allow state farms to carry out these measures in compliance with the recommendations of the National Plant Research Station. The contact said that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Nature Protection to monitor and assess the environmental impact of the release of chemicals into the environment. In practice, because local officials want to avoid penalties, they hide, rather than report, the incidents of uncontrolled release of chemicals into the environment.

¶ 15. (SBU) In 2006, several cows in Yashlyk village of Ahal Province were poisoned and killed by chemicals dumped from a nearby cellulose production plant. A local veterinary specialist, who investigated the incident, said that the plant's waste water, dumped into the valley where the livestock was grazing, caused the death of the animals. Local officials threatened the owners of the cows with a penalty for grazing their cattle on state-owned land in order to pressure them not to raise the issue of compensation. The Ministry of Nature Protection turned a blind eye on the incident. However, shortly after the incident, the government suspended the plant's operation due to technological shortcomings.

¶ 16. (SBU) COMMENT: These two incidents are likely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to environmental damage caused by inappropriate handling of chemicals in Turkmenistan. For example, defoliants have widespread use in preparing cotton fields for

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mechanical harvesting. Enforcement of the environmental protection law is problematic due to inaction and fear of government officials to face possible penalties. Apparently, the unwritten law of the Niyazov era, that forbids government officials from disclosing negative aspects of Turkmen society "for the sake of the nation's stability and prosperity," is still in force. END COMMENT.

CURRAN